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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003143

SIPDIS

REL/GBR AUS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: TNA FIRST DEPUTY SPEAKER WANTS TO FIX PAST U.S. MISTAKES, WILL HELP BRIDGE SUNNI-KURD DIVIDE

Classified By: Political Counselor Robert S. Ford.
Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

11. (C/NF REL GBR AUS) SUMMARY. TNA First Deputy Speaker Dr. Husayn al Shahrستاني told the Ambassador on July 28 that the U.S. and Iraq must work to fix mistakes made during the CPA era that have led to violence that cannot be controlled by Coalition Forces and Iraqi Security Forces. The insecurity hurts the credibility of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani. The Iraqi people must therefore take greater ownership of their security by forming unarmed neighborhood watches. Shahrستاني pointed to corruption as another large problem that must be addressed. He also agreed to work to bridge the differences between the Shia, Kurds, and Sunnis drafting the constitution. END SUMMARY.

Fixing The Mistakes of the Past

12. (C/NF REL GBR AUS) TNA First Deputy Speaker Dr. Husayn al Shahrستاني (Shia-United Iraqi Alliance) told Ambassador, who was accompanied by DCM, on July 28 that serious mistakes made by the CPA and the Iraqi Governing Council were still haunting Iraq and needed to be fixed. According to Shahrستاني, the biggest mistake CPA made was delaying the elections. He elaborated, saying if the elections had been held one year earlier, Iraqis would have been shown early on that they were responsible for their own future. This, he feels, would have drained off much support that the insurgency had early on.

13. (C/NF REL GBR AUS) Shahrستاني added, "Certain groups (read, the Sunni Arabs) feel they have a divine right to rule." "It will take time to get them to realize there is equality" among the different groups in Iraq now, he said. Getting the Sunni Arabs to support the political process is the only way for Iraq to move forward and meet the August 15 constitution deadline.

Iranian Interference Will Not Be Tolerated

14. (C/NF REL GBR AUS) Shahrستاني told Ambassador that Iranian interference in Iraqi affairs, especially any Iranian support for terrorism and narcotics trafficking, would not be tolerated. Ambassador pointed to terrorist training conducted in Iraq by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and Hizbullah as examples of direct Iranian meddling in Iraq. Shahrستاني became visibly animated at this point and again said, "This will not be tolerated." Shahrستاني did admit that controlling the flow of narcotics is very difficult, even for Iran, but estimated that only about one percent of all the narcotics that enter Iran "from the east" transit into Iraq.

Fighting Corruption

15. (C/NF REL GBR AUS) Shahrستاني pointed to corruption as one of the largest problems plaguing the Iraqi Government. He named the Ministries of Finance, Defense, Trade, and Housing as especially "rotten." Members of these ministries, Shahrستاني said, are trying to "hide behind the U.S. Embassy" as they commit their crimes. "If someone is mismanaging money," said Shahrستاني, "they must be arrested."

16. (C/NF REL GBR AUS) The Ministry of Finance has serious accounting problems, said Shahrستاني. Ambassador said the Ministry informed him it had USD 6 billion on hand, a figure later revised down to USD 3 billion. Ambassador pressed Shahrستاني to take positive steps to root out and combat corruption, saying, "We must find out what is going on."

Sistani's Credibility Tied To Security Situation

17. (C/NF REL GBR AUS) Shahrستاني told Ambassador that the security situation in Iraq is undermining the credibility of Ayatollah Sistani. The Iraqi public is blaming Sistani for security problems and other failures, which is diminishing his authority. Iraqi communities must be protected as soon as possible if Sistani's credibility is to survive. Because neither Coalition Forces (CF) nor the ISF can keep the peace, Iraqi citizens must be allowed to form unarmed neighborhood watches to protect themselves, suggested Shahrستاني. Shahrستاني argued that if foreign fighters were permitted to stir up trouble in Iraq, then the door would be open to continued foreign interference in other areas. CF, he added, must cooperate better with the Iraqi Ministry of Defense.

18. (C/NF REL GBR AUS) Ambassador acknowledged Shahrستاني's concerns about security in Iraq. Ambassador reiterated the USG position that building up national institutions, including the ISF, should be the highest priority. If the neighborhood watches were unarmed, however, Ambassador said this would be "no problem."

19. (C/NF REL GBR AUS) Shahrستاني told PolOff before the meeting that the nature of insurgent attacks proves members of the old regime are committing them. For example, attacks often pinpoint exact electricity and water lines that supply Baghdad. Only people with an intimate knowledge of the electrical and water grids, such as engineers from the former regime, could accomplish this. In some cases, electricity has been diverted from Baghdad to Sunni Arab areas, and these areas suffer very few electrical blackouts.

Shahrستاني The Bridge Builder

10. (C/NF REL GBR AUS) Shahrستاني agreed to work to bring the Kurds and Sunni Arabs together with the Shia to achieve agreement on the constitution. He said this should not be difficult, as their positions were fairly close. Sunni Arabs feel they have become second-class citizens, and that others will make decisions affecting their future. Kurds and Sunni Arabs are not serious about many of their points of disagreement, he said. For example, Kurds propose "Federal Republic of Iraq" as the new name of the country. To answer this, the Sunni Arabs proposed "Islamic Federal Republic of Iraq." According to Shahrستاني, neither side really wants these names; "Republic of Iraq" will be fine. Each side is merely playing games of brinkmanship with the other. Shahrستاني added that the Shia and U.S. agree on many issues.

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De-Ba'athification in the Iraqi Special Tribunal
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11. (C/NF REL GBR AUS) Addressing pending Iraqi Special Tribunal (IST) legislation, Ambassador pressed Shahrستاني to ensure the de-Ba'athification policy as applied to the IST, would only apply to those judges who were members of the top three or four levels of the Ba'ath party. Replacing any of the trained IST judges at this juncture would have immediate and severe repercussions, including delaying the judicial process in many of the upcoming tribunal cases. Shahrستاني indicated that the legislation currently under consideration explicitly states that all court decisions made up until now will be recognized and that no judges will be removed (Comment: The legislation under consideration in fact does require that all judges who belonged to the Ba'ath be removed, although Shahrستاني told Embassy in subsequent conversation that this was not the "intent" of the legislation. Embassy is engaging TNA Legal Committee Chair and others on this issue. End Comment.)

12. (U) REO HILLA, REO BASRA, REO MOSUL, and REO KIRKUK, minimize considered.

Khalilzad